

Written Testimony of Ilicia Balaban, Issue Associate
Before the Connecticut General Assembly Transportation Committee

Tuesday, February 24, 2009

Written testimony supporting Proposed House Bill 6210, An Act Establishing Commuter Rail Service between New Haven, Hartford and Springfield

Senator DeFronzo, Representative Guerrera, and members of the Transportation Committee,

The Connecticut Public Interest Research Group (ConnPIRG) is pleased to submit this testimony supporting Proposed House Bill 6210. Connecticut commuters desperately need public transportation options that connect instate municipalities and connect Connecticut to the major metropolises in New York and Massachusetts.

According to the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, the New Haven, Hartford, Springfield Commuter Rail Line would create 775 new jobs in construction and operation. In addition to these preliminary jobs, access to public transportation has proven across the nation to be the top consideration for business location. On top of initial jobs created, we can expect a massive new business investment along the corridor creating hundreds of more jobs for Connecticut residents.

Commuter rail service in the Farmington Valley corridor would also create over \$152 million in economic growth in its first operational years. Again this number represents the most preliminary estimates of the potential economic impact of the line. Across the nation, we have seen new commuter rail projects far exceed their projected ridership and economic return estimates.

The states economic revitalization depends on our ability to connect to major metropolitan areas, like those in Boston and New York. It also depends upon new businesses having an incentive to invest in Connecticut real estate. According to DOT Commissioner Joe Marie, access to public transportation is the top consideration for business location.

In addition to the economic impacts, the New Haven, Hartford, Springfield Commuter Rail Line would benefit the environment as well as mitigate congestion on I-91. Connecticut commuters waste an average of 38 hours a year stuck in traffic. This results in the needless expenditure of millions of gallons of gasoline and tons of additional carbon dioxide emission that would be avoided if commuters had transportation alternatives available.

Commuters living in Connecticut's fastest growing suburbs produce three times more carbon dioxide on average than those living in more densely developed cities. If the state is to achieve the goal of reducing carbon dioxide emissions 20% below 1990 standards by

2020 as was laid out in the Global Warming Solutions Act than we must get cars off the road by providing commuters with transportation alternatives.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony today. ConnPIRG urges the committee and the General Assembly as a whole to approve legislation in 2009 that would establish commuter rail service between New Haven, Hartford and Springfield. Such legislation would benefit Connecticut's economy and environment by providing commuters with alternatives to single-passenger transportation and incentivizing business and commercial development in the states most promising and neglected cities.

Sincerely,

Ilicia Balaban
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Connecticut Public Interest Research Group (ConnPIRG)